

I am pleased to offer my thanks and support to the Elks Lodge of Forest Grove, Oregon, which has organized a Flag Day celebration to educate the community about our flag and its history. The Order of the Elks promotes American principles of individual freedom, opportunity, and dignity, consistent with the principles that the U.S. flag represents.

I am honored to provide the Elks Lodge of Forest Grove with a flag flown over the U.S. Capitol for their celebration, and I thank them for their service to our community and Nation.

CELEBRATING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FRIENDS OF THE PARKS AND TRAILS OF ST. PAUL AND RAMSEY COUNTY

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 9, 2010

Ms. McCOLLUM. Madam Speaker, today I rise to congratulate the Friends of the Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the organization. Since it was established in 1985, this group has been dedicated to serving and promoting parks and green spaces in St. Paul, Minnesota, and surrounding communities.

Executive Director Peggy Lynch has been there every step of the way, first leading a group of citizens to found the organization to keep a massive high-rise development out of Hidden Fall/Crosby Regional Park in order to preserve green space for everyone in our community. The Friends of the Parks and trails has since developed into a broad, membership-supported nonprofit group.

The Friends of the Parks has proven their commitment to St. Paul and Ramsey County parks by promoting open space preservation, protection, improvement, and development of new parks. And as a vital member of the community the Friends of the Parks have successfully laid the foundation for lasting change by working with St. Paul and Ramsey County to require no "net loss" of parkland in any deals the city or county makes, and also helped to create city and county park commissions.

Parks are essential to Minnesotans. They not only provide recreational opportunities and a connection to the natural world, they also provide employment, economic development and increase property values. For 25 years, the Friends of the Parks and Trails have been serving my community, ensuring that all Minnesotans have the opportunity to benefit from the positive resources provided by parks. This deserves our thanks, support and commendation.

Madam Speaker, please join me in rising to honor the 25th anniversary of the Friends of the Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County, Peggy Lynch, and all its members and volunteers for their hard work and constant dedication to ensuring parks and green space are available for all to enjoy.

OSCE REPRESENTATIVE CITES
THREATS TO FREE MEDIA

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 9, 2010

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, as Co-Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I wish to draw the attention of colleagues to the timely and informative testimony of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatovic, who testified earlier today at a Commission hearing on "Threats to Free Media in the OSCE Region." She focused on various threats to journalists and independent media outlets, including physical attacks and adoption of repressive laws on the media as well as other forms of harassment. Most troubling is the murder of journalists because of their professional activities. According to the U.S.-based Committee to Protect Journalists, 52 journalists have been killed in Russia alone since 1992, many reporting on corruption or human rights violations. Ms. Mijatovic also flagged particular concern over existing and emerging threats to freedom on the Internet and other communications technologies. She also voiced concern over the use of criminal statutes on defamation, libel and insult which are used by some OSCE countries to silence journalists or force the closure of media outlets. With respect to the situation in the United States, she urged adoption of a shield law at the federal level to create a journalists' privilege for federal proceedings. Such a provision was part of the Free Flow of Information Act of 2009, which passed the House early in the Congress and awaits consideration by the full Senate.

As one who has worked to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the 56 countries that comprise the OSCE, I share many of the concerns raised by Ms. Mijatovic in her testimony and commend them to them to colleagues.

ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE REPRESENTATIVE ON FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA

(By Dunja Mijatovic)

[From the Helsinki Commission Hearing on the Threats to Free Media in the OSCE Region, June 9, 2010]

Dear Chairmen, Distinguished Commissioners, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to be invited to this hearing before the Helsinki Commission at the very beginning of my mandate. I feel privileged to speak before you today. The Helsinki Commission's welcoming statement issued on the day of my appointment is a clear manifestation of the strong support you continuously show toward the work of this unique Office, and I assure you, distinguished Commissioners, that this fact is very much appreciated.

It will be three months tomorrow since I took office as the new Representative on Freedom of the Media to the OSCE. Even though three months may sound short, it has proved more than enough to gain a deep insight, and unfortunately also voice concerns, about the decline of media freedom in many of the 56 countries that today constitute the OSCE.

Although the challenges and dangers that journalists face in our countries may differ from region to region, one sad fact holds true everywhere: The freedom to express ourselves is questioned and challenged from

many sides. Some of these challenges are blatant, others concealed; some of them follow traditional methods to silence free speech and critical voices, some use new technologies to suppress and restrict the free flow of information and media pluralism; and far too many result in physical harassment and deadly violence against journalists.

Today, I would like to draw your attention to the constant struggle of so many institutions and NGOs around the world, including your Commission and my Institution, to combat and ultimately stop violence against journalists. I would also like to address several other challenges that I want to place in the center of my professional activities, each of which I intend to improve by relentlessly using the public voice I am now given at the OSCE.

Let me first start with violence against journalists.

Ever since it was created in 1997, my Office has been raising attention to the alarming increase of violent attacks against journalists. Not only is the high number of violent attacks against journalists a cause for concern. Equally alarming is the authorities' far too prevalent willingness to classify many of the murders as unrelated to the journalists' professional activities. We also see that more and more often critical speech is being punished with questionable charges brought against the journalists.

Impunity of perpetrators and the responsible authorities' passivity in investigating and failing to publicly condemn these murders breeds further violence. There are numerous cases that need to be raised over and over again. We need to continue to loudly repeat the names of these courageous individuals who lost their lives for the words they have written. I am sorry for all those whom I will not mention today; but the names that follow are on the list that I call "the Hall of Shame" of those governments that still have not brought to justice the perpetrators of the horrifying murders that happened in their countries.

The most recent murder of a journalist in the OSCE area is the one of the Kyrgyz opposition journalist Gennady Pavlyuk (Bely Parokhod), who was killed in Kazakhstan in December last year. It gives me hope that the new Interim Government of Kyrgyzstan has announced to save no efforts to bring the perpetrators to justice, as well as those involved in the 2007 murder of Alisher Saipov (Siyosat).

The Russian Federation remains the OSCE participating State where most members of the media are killed. Paul Klebnikov (Forbes, Russia), Anna Politkovskaya (Novaya Gazeta), Anastasia Baburova (Novaya Gazeta), are the most reported about, but let us also remember Magomed Yevloyev (Ingushetiya), Ivan Safronov (Kommersant), Yury Shchekochikhin (Novaya Gazeta), Igor Domnikov (Novaya Gazeta), Vladislav Listyev (ORT), Dmitry Kholodov (Moskovsky Komsomolets) and many others.

We also should not forget the brutal murders of the following journalists, some remain unresolved today:

Hrant Dink (Agos) Armenian Turkish journalist was shot in 2007 in Turkey.

Elmar Huseynov (Monitor) was murdered in 2005 in Azerbaijan.

Georgy Gongadze (Ukrainskaya Pravda) was killed in 2000 in Ukraine.

In Serbia, Slavko Curuvija (Dnevni Telegraf) was murdered in 1999, and Milan Pantic (Vecernje Novosti) was killed in 2001. In Montenegro, Dusko Jovanovic (Dan), was shot dead in 2004.

In Croatia, Ivo Pukanic (Nacional) and his marketing director, Niko Franjic, were killed by a car bomb in 2008.